

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION- A discussion about Media education in the Western countries, Europe and Sweden

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ABSTRACT

Media Education is perhaps even more important today as more and more students have practical access to a variety of media both at home and in school. There is a need to develop new skills and competencies that allow users and consumers “information literate”. Media literacy has tended to focus on cultural expressions and has a critical dimension that information skills are lacking. Recently, however, information literacy has become increasingly linked to issues of democracy and active citizenship. In late 2000-century the concepts often migrate internationally and education for all media now subsumed under the name Media (Literacy) Education. The media and information literacy are increasingly linked to issues of democracy and participatory citizenship. Media and information literacy has come to the fore, and are fundamental parts of the work to achieve a media and information society capable of promoting a professional, sustainable society.

The paper is written as a brief integrative literature review. The core aim is to find a common line in what goal with this education could be. The text describes what research, policy documents and various media organizations consider to be the core goals of Media Literacy education, and these goals are reported both in the running text and in different tables. The paper concludes with practical advices on the critical media education, and with suggestions for further research.

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Introduction

This paper is a brief integrative literature review¹ which intends to discuss the concept: Media Education literacy in schools. The aims are to find a common line in what the aims with this education are, and to give example of what a good media education ought to include. The paper uses Pérez Torneros² definition of the concept of **Media Literacy**. This means the term used in an information society to describe the knowledge and skills required for a conscious, autonomous development of the new communications environment - the digital, global and multimedia. **Media (Literacy) Education** is then the process that will lead to the media literacy ability needed to handle the modern information society³. The concepts should be seen as an expression of a fusion of the words IT/ICT (Information Technology/Information and Communication Technology) and the media, which are being more used internationally.

1. Why media literacy education?

It can not be ignored that the vast majority of children now are in contact with media, both traditional media and digital media, including the Internet. It is no longer possible to distinguish between traditional media and new media. For example, it is possible to read newspapers and watch television and film in a computer or a mobile phone. Google Earth makes it possible to virtually take a walk in a neighbourhood in another country far away instead of looking at a map in an Atlas. In various virtual communities, children with similar interests are able to be in contact with each other even though they might be in different countries. Media literacy education is important today as more and more children have practical access to a variety of media both at home and at school. There is a need to develop new skills and competence that support users and consumers to become "information literate". Media literacy has tended to focus on cultural expression and has a critical dimension that information skills are lacking. Recently, however, information literacy has become

¹ See for instance Russell, 2005

² Pérez Tornero works at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

³ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008 p 103

increasingly linked to issues of democracy and active citizenship. Carlsson et. al⁴. argue that given the growing convergence of radio, television, and computer, the media and information literacy is increasingly linked to issues of democracy and participatory citizenship. Media and information literacy are fundamental parts of the work to achieve a media and information society capable of promoting a professional, democratic, and sustainable society. In the late 2000-century the concepts often merge internationally and education for all media now subsumed under the name *Media (Literacy) Education*.

In year 2009, the European Council and European Parliament agreed that all EU citizens ought to have access to broadband. Although the number of fixed broadband lines in the European Union has more than doubled from July 2005 to July 2008, 30% of the populations in rural areas still have not broadband access. Viviane Reding⁵, EU commissioner for information society and media, has spoken of the need for investment in broadband to all EU citizens because this is of the utmost importance for the EU economy and growth. The European Commission has conducted a large European study on Media Literacy⁶ with data from 2006. This study concluded that homes in the Nordic countries have the greatest access to broadband at home, about 50%, while only about 10% of the homes in countries such as Ireland and Turkey have broadband. Unlike these large differences in availability of broadband, the same year almost 100% of all homes in all countries did have access to TV. Spite these facts, TV does not have a long history - it became general only in the early 1960s. It is easy to imagine a close future where all homes will have access to fast broadband!

Sweden is one of the countries in the world where most home already have access to broadband⁷. In 2006, half of the households in Sweden had broadband access. In year 2009 as many as 78% of the population did have access to both Internet and broadband in their homes. (In year 2000 the number of homes with access to broadband in Sweden were only 3 %⁸) In year 2008, according to research⁹, Swedish children of the ages 9-14 years old, used various media for four hours a day. More than 30% of this time was spent watching TV, and about 20% was spent using the Internet. The age group of 15-24 years old, spent the same amount of time for media use, but used 30% of the time on the Internet, and watched TV for 20% of the

⁴ Carlsson U., Tayie S., Jacquinet-Delaunay G., Perez Tornero J.M. and UNESCO, 2008b p 24

⁵ NORDICOM-Utblick Europa, 2009 p 11

⁶ Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona, 2007

⁷ Färdigh, 2008

⁸ World Internet Institute, 2009

⁹ NORDICOM, 2009

time. Almost all children have access to at least one TV and a mobile phone, and more than 66% of the children have a mp3 player of their own. In the age group of 9-14 years old, the mp3 players have become increasingly common in the last three years, from 22% to 82%.

During a period of 10 years, young people have increased their use of different media with half an hour. The increased time is all due to increased Internet usage. At the end of 2008, a Swedish report¹⁰ concludes that the most remarkable development of Internet use in Sweden recently, is among pre-school children. The Internet use has become increasingly common among these children. According to this Swedish report on media use in 2008, every fifth 3-year-old and every other 5-year-old have started to use the Internet with their parents, often in conjunction with the television program Bollibompa – a TV-show for young children. Bollibompa has an associated website with movies and “point and click”-games for children. This is a result of a trend towards an increasingly Internet use, which has accelerated in recent years. When children begin school, already every three of four children become acquainted with the Internet. When they start school, they use ten times more time on the Internet at home than in school. In year 2007 the average value of Internet use at home is more than 12 hours a week and in school it is only just more than 1 hour a week. It is difficult to find children in the age of 10 years old, who do not use Internet at all¹¹. One interpretation of this report could be that more children have convenient access to a variety of media both at home and at school today. It is interesting to see if the increasing rate of broadband access at home in the other countries will result in the same development as in Sweden. It could mean that Media (literacy) education will be even more important today than it was before all over the Western world. The report emphasizes the importance to teach even young children to respond to media in a sensible way. Although this is the parents' obligation, the schools have a mission to support the parents in a responsible manner.

2. A historical perspective of Media Literacy

Since the area Media Literacy has changed a lot over time, there is a need for a historical overview to ensure understanding of the concept. This section is an overview of the

¹⁰ Findahl & Zimic, 2008

¹¹ Findahl, 2008

development of the Media education in Europe. The reader should be aware that time periods overlap each other.

Until the 1960s - Classic Literacy (reading - writing - understanding) has dominated for centuries and plays a major role in teaching.

From the 1960s - Audio Visual literacy dominates and relates to electronic media such as film, focusing on the images and sequences of images. Film Clubs starts in schools and major European countries in this context is France, Britain, Italy, Germany and Poland.

In the 1970s and early 1980s - the interest is focused on television: Media education becomes more critical and takes great impression of the French semiotics and critical experiments made by Barthes and Journal Communications. Researchers as Hoggart, Williams and Stuart Hall are mentioned as examples of important names in British culture research.

In the 1980s - a large focus on TV - and Video. The trend is particularly strong in countries such as France, Italy and Spain. In the late 1980s and early 1990s - many private TV channels arise. Media Teaching focuses now on the TV program content, and influence.

From the mid-1990s - Digital literacy predominates and is associated with digital media and especially the Internet and the Web. It will be necessary to acquire new skills. Now the concept shifts of focus from content to be used synonymously with the technical skills needed to manage modern digital tools. The European tradition of critical media literacy is abandoned and all eyes riveted on the U.S. to become a model for the new information society. This reinforces the focus on technology management.

From the 2000s - Media literacy is the concept of what is happening at a merging of digital literacy and the tradition of Audio Visual literacy. New communication platforms, multimedia and new mobile communication technology starts to erase the difference between digital and electronic media. This occurs at an advanced stage of development in an information society¹².

3. Research about Media Literacy Education

The databases Academic Search Elite and ERIC have been mainly used to find primary sources such as scientific articles. There is an extensive research on Media Literacy. The first keyword used; Media Literacy Education, has been changing for many other names on the same concept. To understand media literacy is a need for a historical perspective on different concepts.

¹² The European Commission-recommendation on media literacy, 2007

This applies, for example, to a common expression in the Media Literacy research, *Information literacy*, which from the mid-90s was an expression used synonymously with the technical skills needed to manage modern digital tools. From the late 2000's the concept is mainly used by librarians and the phrase implies now that knowledge of information retrieval can be seen as a process to get the right skills, attitude and values to effectively navigate and use digital resources such as Internet¹³.

Digital Literacy is often used to describe the teaching of technical skills associated with *Online learning*¹⁴. Sometimes the term is used together with the term *Computer literacy*¹⁵, which often includes various safety features in the use of the Internet. OFCOM¹⁶ is still using the expression *digital literacy*, year 2009 to separate the digital skills from other Media literacy skills. *Holistic Media Education* is used in the U.S. from year 2003 for a broad concept in line with UNESCO's thoughts. Duran et.al¹⁷ uses the expression in a study designed to evaluate a course at College level with a holistic concept of media literacy. This means not only critical reading of the media but also on developing an awareness of the media structure, media impact and opportunities for self-use media.

Critical media literacy is used in the U.S. as a reflection of a trend that has developed the concept. In the beginning it meant only the technical instruction in how to deal with a computer, Internet and about library references. But the concept develops now toward to cover all parts according to UNESCO's guidelines on good media skills. Semali¹⁸ is using the name as early as 2003 in an article in which he argues for the need for Critical Media Literacy. He bases this on observations of the need for education in the visual language where the children use different multimedia.

Media and Internet Literacy is used by the European Council¹⁹. It is also used by Livingstone²⁰ when she emphasizes that reading and writing abilities and critical analytical ability still is the base for all so-called Literacy, and children who can not read in books, can not read and work on the Internet.

¹³ See for example Limberg and Folkesson, 2006

¹⁴ Friedman and Heafner, 2008

¹⁵ Raising the stakes for digital literacy 2008

¹⁶ OFCOM, 2009b

¹⁷ Duran R., Yousman B., Walsh K.M. and Longshore M.A., 2008

¹⁸ Semali, 2003, p 276

¹⁹ The Council of Europe-Internet Literacy, 2006

²⁰ Livingstone, 2007

Media literacy education provides a framework and a pedagogy for the new literacy needed for living, working, and citizenship in the 21st century²¹.

This paper uses the terms *Media Literacy Education* and *Media literacy*. Media Education and Media Literacy education is used in the 2000 century, when research is about how to improve media education in schools. This expression is used by Thoman and Jolls²² and Jenkins²³ to describe the skills that a citizen needs in the 21st century²⁴.

A framework when research on media literacy / media literacy education was gathered, was the fact that Media Education should not only involve the use of different media - the research would also include teaching about the media. This has led to a situation where lots of new research articles on media literacy have been eliminated. According to a Swedish analysis²⁵ of the use of IT (Information Technology) in schools in year 2007, the overall objective of IT in schools is still to improve learning among children. But to achieve the benefits of education, which usually is emphasized in the Media research, such as increase children's motivation and skills, increased autonomy and development of the work of the group, the work is focused on the technology used in connection with a pedagogical idea. It does not just focus on the technology used. Increased motivation of the children in turn leads to increased attention and engagement during lessons, which promotes learning. Research studies²⁶ show a correlation between teachers' pedagogical approach to IT and the benefits of the education. Swedish schools now have Internet-based digital platforms where teachers communicate with parents via e-mail, and where children have digital portfolios. All teachers must educate themselves in the Practical IT and media literacy, schools buy mini laptops and several classes have access to their own computer (called one.-to-one project), and wireless networks are common in schools. Effects of motivation are often found in education, which focuses learning as a process, rather than on solving a specific function. The more embedded or built-in task to a particular technology, the greater the effect occurs in the relationship between children's knowledge and IT. Moss²⁷ writes year 2006 a review of 40 years of teaching of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the UK. The most important outcome of the

²¹ Thoman and Jolls, 2004, abstract, p 18

²² Ibid.

²³ Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison and Margaret Weigel, 2006

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Skarin, 2007a

²⁶ Skarin, 2007b

²⁷ Moss, 2006 abstract

experience of using digital technology to improve education in formal and informal learning, is that there are the teacher and the children themselves who are the best guides to success, when a powerful technology begins to affect the educational process. To this can be added, as Buckingham²⁸ does, the best practices in media education is a combination of hands-on - the production and critical reflection in order to build on children's past experiences and appreciation of the media. The international study, "Pedagogy and ICT Use in Schools Around the World²⁹ " from the SITES research shows in the same way the importance of teachers' pedagogical orientation. The understanding of the changing skills requirements and willingness to try to use more cooperative-oriented and exploratory work, are central to how IT can be used in learning, not the access to technologies.

When used in school, it is not just about one single media literacy. Many so-called 'literacy skills are often embedded in each other. Gitelman³⁰ believes that instead of separating different Literacy concepts, we should have an ecological approach by considering the interaction between all-literacy skills in different media systems. Similarly, claims the British researcher Sonia Livingstone³¹ in year 2007 in an article published by the American organization, the MacArthur Foundation. She argues it is a need for different types of skills that are acting together. The traditional information technology skills, (information literacy), is no longer sufficient. The Media and Information literacy are increasingly linked to issues of democracy and participatory citizenship. Media literacy is focusing on cultural expression, an important dimension of information literacy has been lacking. Livingstone et.al.³² argues that both information literacy tradition and Media literacy tradition lack a coherent analysis of the content, because both traditions interpret people more as a receiver than producers of information / texts. The Information literacy tradition would benefit from a more critical analysis of information, and Media literacy tradition would benefit from a more complex view of access opportunities. Traditionally, research methods in Information Literacy have a quantitative approach with experiment, measurement and evaluation. Media literacy tradition has a qualitative approach with interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observation. Both

²⁸Buckingham, 2007Ibid. p 112 with reference to Buckingham, 2003

²⁹ Mason, Law, Pelgrum, Plomp and SpringerLink (Online service), 2008

³⁰ Gitelman, 1999 i Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison and Margaret Weigel, 2006 s8

³¹ Livingstone, 2007 pp 113-114

³² Livingstone, Van Couvering and Thumim, 2008, p 122

traditions develop innovative ways to meet new empirical challenges, through triangulation of methods in literacy research³³.

Livingstone emphasizes that reading and writing abilities and critical analytical ability is still the base for all known Literacy. She argues for three main objectives with what she called the Media and Information literacy;

1. *Democracy, participation and active citizenship*
2. *Knowledge economy, competitiveness, and choice*
3. *Lifelong learning, cultural expression, and personal fulfilment. Literacy should, it is argued by these critics, be conceived as both an individual accomplishment or a social and cultural practice*³⁴

Media literacy contributes to the critical and expressive abilities that are relevant to a full and meaningful life and a skilled, creative and ethical society. This is because, according to Livingstone³⁵, our environment includes media with many pictures / symbols that are interpreted, and this provides the framework for our choices, skills and values that are relevant to our daily lives. Livingstone stresses that the aims of media education are what she calls "deliberalt framed" to cover both the structure which supports skills but also of individual talents. Skills must be taken both as an individual and in "a social and cultural practices. Buckingham³⁶ points out in a similar manner that the opportunity for reflection and deliberative dialogue is not something learned, but something that the teacher must consciously build in a systematic media education process.

4. New Literacies

The research analysis of Jenkins et.al³⁷. in year 2006, a so-called White Paper has received much attention in the West. Scientists believe that schools must pay more attention to promoting what is called New Media literacies, a set of skills and social skills that young people need in connection with the use of the new media. The New Literacies involve social skills developed through collaboration via the Internet (networking). An expression that emerges strongly in the research report is *Participatory Cultures*.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Livingstone, 2007

³⁵ Ibid. s. 116-117

³⁶ Buckingham, 2007 s 115

³⁷ Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison and Margaret Weigel, 2006 s 4

We value the term *participation* for the ways in which it draws attention to situated learning theory, social media literacies, and mobilized forms of media engagement³⁸.

A key objective is to shift the focus from questions of technological access to the opportunities that children and young people have to participate and develop the cultural competence and social skills necessary for full participation. With participatory cultures moved Literacy-concept from mere literacy as an expression of the individual, to an expression of community and participation. Almost all new literacy skills involve social skills but they still are built on a foundation of traditional-Literacy skills. That means literacy, research skills, technical competence, and skills in critical analysis - knowledge that hopefully is taught in classrooms. To participate in the virtual, social communities move the focus on literacy from the individual expressions for joint work³⁹. Dr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General for Communication and Information - UNESCO, expressed similar thoughts as follows:

Media education comes within reach of Information Literacy as we are facing a “*convergence culture*”, which according to Henry Jenkins, is “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumers interact in unpredictable ways. Blogging, YouTube, Wikipedia, and other social networking sites are all examples of how this convergence culture is playing out in the networked world⁴⁰”.

Many media researcher see potential benefits of these forms of participation in culture, such as the possibility of learning from each other = a so-called peer-to-peer learning, a changed attitude towards intellectual property - namely the sharing of individual knowledge, and the diversification of cultural expression forms. These skills are valued in the modern workplace and for the young people it may be an enhanced perception of citizenship. The reverse side of the coin is that this participation serves as a new form of the hidden curriculum. This means that young people will be left behind if they are not by themselves assimilate this participation. Jenkins’ research analysis mentioned several researchers who have been of importance for the development of media research. Livingstone⁴¹ writes about children and young people's identity, Gee⁴² writes on the advantages of enabling participating as motivation-raising activities because they depend on peer-to-peer teaching and the differences in age, class, race, gender and educational level does not matter. Everybody can participate in

³⁸ Ito, Davidson, Jenkins, Lee, Eisenberg and Weiss, 2007Ibid.

³⁹ Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison and Margaret Weigel, 2006 Ibid.s 19

⁴⁰ Khan, 2008 s 17

⁴¹ Livingstone, 2003

⁴² Gee, 2004

different ways depending skills and interests. Each participant is constantly motivated to acquire new skills or improve their existing knowledge, and because they allow each participant to feel as an expert while receptive to others' expertise, these activities become motivation-raising activities. The PEW study⁴³ (Lenhardt & Madden, 2005) study shows that young people who create and disseminate their own media content are more likely to respect the rights of others. Scientists believe that the development is going from a world in which some are producers and some are consumers, to a world where everyone has a more active part in the culture produced.

Research on the teaching of Media literacy, and not just the use of the media seems to be rare. Some examples of relevant research in which media use is extended to include teaching about the media are reported here in this paper. The Swedish research in media literacy is often about information literacy. Limberg and Folkesson⁴⁴ have explored what teachers and librarians find are important by teaching information literacy. The findings of this study are that the main purpose of teaching Information literacy is that the adults will give children help to develop a strategy for different abilities, as to have the ability to assess different sources of relevance and reliability and the ability to process various information sources to create new knowledge.

Van Bauwel's case study⁴⁵ of children's acquisition of audio-visual skills with an emphasis on critical media literacy has results that are overwhelmingly positive. Children aged 10-12 years in Belgium work with sounds. Van Bauwel studies how children use sound as a "new" language and how children acquire and use their media skills through involvement in an educational art project. Children are encouraged to give life to their creativity by transforming the experience of their own environment, and then support the sounds with pictures. Children learn to respect each other's work and ideas, to work in teams and take their own responsibility. The children are very keen to learn new techniques to be able to fend for themselves. For most of the children, it is very important to complete their short films to design and create a product, provide a sense of intrinsic value and recognition. The class teacher had obvious difficulty in letting children think for themselves. By getting knowledge

⁴³ Cannot find the reference to EndNote. Lenhardt, A., & Madden, M. (2005). *Teen Content Creators and Consumers*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, November 2. Available online at http://www.pewInternet.org/PPF/r/166/report_display.asp, i Jenkins, Katie Clinton, Ravi Purushotma, Alice J. Robison and Margaret Weigel, 2006 s. 10

⁴⁴ Limberg and Folkesson, 2006

⁴⁵ Van Bauwel, 2008

about the technology of how the media works through their own work, the children will receive a critical ability of the media and media content⁴⁶.

Sometimes media literacy education fails for various reasons. Rebekah Willett⁴⁷ describes a project in London where the aim is to teach children how to make computer games. The idea is that pupils should understand the underlying work, and also learn from each other. Another objective of the study is that by teaching, build links around the school, recreation centers and homes. The results turned out to be nothing like she expected. The children, 9-13 years old, did not have sufficient self-awareness to understand that they can not make the same great games that they purchase, and therefore the children became very disappointed. The project thus shows a clear reliance that the children's own gambling could not facilitate the understanding of the graphical work.

5. UNESCO

Besides different research results, this paper includes studies of various reports, from UNESCO, the European Council and European Commission and from different media organizations. These reports can not be construed as research, but as policy that legitimates itself with the help of research.

UNESCO has since Grünwald Declaration⁴⁸ in 1982, worked with media education / media literacy, and argues that the media is an increasingly important and powerful force in today's society. To ensure a consistent and systematic way of teaching about the media, it must be seen as a prerequisite for modern citizenship. In 2001, Professor David Buckingham, London was commissioned to write a Policy Paper⁴⁹, prepared for UNESCO, Sector of Communication and Information. Buckingham focuses his text on children and young people of school age and the document gives a brief definition of the area Media education / Media literacy, and a brief overview of developments around the world. The result is a strategy that UNESCO can support at local, national and international level. Buckingham argues that media education must be recognized as a fundamental human right of children to enjoy the rights proclaimed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. He takes Article 13, a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Willett, 2007 p 179

⁴⁸ UNESCO, 1982

⁴⁹ UNESCO-David Buckingham, 2001

child's right to free speech and Article 17 Right of access to various media and information sources and Article 31, Right to leisure and to participate in cultural life, and thus participation in the processes that govern their lives - as an example of this claim. The document defines Media education as something that applies to all forms of media, including moving images (such as film, TV and video), radio and recorded music, print media (especially newspapers and printed), and the new digital communications technologies. Media education aims to develop a broad "literacy", not only in terms of reading and writing, but also by the understanding of systems of images and sounds. Media education shall act on the media, not to be confused with merely teaching through media, such as teaching with the help of TV or computers, or instrumental use of media as teaching aids or educational technology without its media discussion. Media education shall aim to develop both critical understanding and active participation to make it possible for young people to interpret and make informed choices as media consumers, and also to become media producers with developed critical and creative capacity and become more powerful participants in society.

The Paris meeting in 2007 found that Grünvald declaration still has great relevance, and is perhaps even more important 25 years later. UNESCO adopts now "*The Paris Agenda*⁵⁰", that is twelve recommendations for Media education in order to promote the practical implementation. Media education is placed within the framework of lifelong learning at all stages and will cover all media. It is also important to develop a common definition of Media education / Media literacy and to strengthen links between Media education, cultural diversity and respect for human rights⁵¹. It is important to create networks and exchange in the organization and make international exchange visible. Countries will increase awareness and mobilize political decision makers, mobilizing all stakeholders in the education system and mobilize other actors in the social field. Basic skills and evaluation systems should be developed together with appropriate development and teaching methods. Media education should be integrated into the initial training of teachers and media education and research should be developed. In 2008, UNESCO publishes a proposal for teacher training⁵² in Media education in order to integrate media education and ICT (in the UNESCO text: Media education and information literacy = MIL) and the formulation of such a teacher so broad that it can be applied throughout the world and tailored to their needs. Perceptions of the European

⁵⁰ UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007b

⁵¹ Carlsson U., Tayie S., Jacquinet-Delaunay G., Perez Tornero J.M. and UNESCO, 2008a s 50-55

⁵² UNESCO-Teacher training, 2008b

Commission and several Western organizations on Media education for Media education are integrated in this document, such as key concept from the Canadian media organization the Association for Media Literacy (AML⁵³) and the following definition from the Center for Media Literacy (CML)⁵⁴:

“Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.”⁵⁵

The UN - Alliance of Civilizations⁵⁶, became a organisation in 2005 following an initiative by UN former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The aim is to improve understanding and cooperation between nations and peoples of different cultures and regions and to counter the forces acting for the polarization and extremism. The project "The UN Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education Clearing house" is a newly developed educational project within the organization that takes account of new cultures in the information society.

6. Council of Europe - European Commission

Since the Lissabon strategy⁵⁷ year 2000 the European Commission together with the Council of Europe has been worked with Media education / Media literacy. European Commission explains its interest in promoting Media literacy in the EU because the media play a key role for Europe's citizens to better understand the world and participate in democratic and cultural life. Media education should be a part of the fundamental rights of all citizens throughout the world and the purpose of Media education is to raise awareness of the many forms of media that people encounter in their everyday lives. A European approach to Media literacy in the digital environment, stating in 2007 that Media literacy should include all media. Media literacy is one of the most important conditions for an active and full citizenship and is one of the contexts in which intercultural dialogue must be promoted. Media education will help the public perception of how the media filter their perceptions and opinions, shapes popular

⁵³ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

⁵⁴ Centre for Media Literacy, 2008 s 42

⁵⁵ UNESCO-Teacher training, 2008a s. 8

⁵⁶ UN-Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education clearinghouse, 2009

⁵⁷ Det var vid toppmötet i Lissabon i mars 2000 som stats- och regeringscheferna enades om en gemensam strategi för att på bred front möta de ekonomiska, sociala och miljöutmaningar som EU står inför. Se <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2504>

culture and influence personal choices⁵⁸. Teaching should give them the capacity for critical thinking and a creative ability to solve problems to make the citizens to discerning consumers and producers of information. EU Parliament⁵⁹ declares in December 2008 in a resolution on Media education that media literacy is "a necessary key skill in information and communication society". Media literacy should form "an integral part of the curriculum at all school levels and be a compulsory component of teacher training, but it is also important that parents and older people may learn more about the media. The most important ability is to filter and classify information of the large flow of data and images. Finally, the resolution calls on EU Commission to adopt a recommendation and develop an action plan for Media literacy. An EU conference on Media literacy⁶⁰ in Prague in March 2009 showed that both a recommendation and a study on the subject is on the Commission's agenda for year 2009. In the conference there are a lot of discussions on copyright issues and the importance of increased awareness of copyright in order to combat piracy. In year 2010, a new European policy document about media literacy is planned to be discussed in the Summit 2010 conference, Karlstad, Sweden, organized by the organization the European Charter of Media Literacy⁶¹.

OFCOM⁶² is the official media organisation in UK. It publishes reports, gives advice etc.

From Europe to U.S.

European researches often refer to the U.S., where several strong organizations that work with Media Literacy issue emerge during the 2000-century. *Project New Media Literacies* (NML) began to work in April 2005 to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing new media literacy work, which then became the project's theoretical framework. The project's main goal is to help young people to both use and reflect on the media and in the process, acquire important skills in teamwork, leadership, problem solving, collaboration, brainstorming, communication, and to be able to create different projects by themselves. New Media Literacy is supported by the Mc Arthur Foundation and the organization has been able to provide a variety of research articles relating to Media Literacy, where Jenkins is one of the famous

⁵⁸ The European Commission-What, 2009a

⁵⁹ Europaparlamentet, 2008

⁶⁰ Se länk: <http://www.media-conference.cz/> 2009-06-10

⁶¹ EuroMediaLiteracy, 2009

⁶² OFCOM, 2009a

names. Thoman and Jolls⁶³ have worked with Media Literacy Education very early. Thoman started the organization Center for Media Literacy (CML) from a school project back in 1977 and Jolls became the organization's president in 1999. Thoman is now a board member of the American media organization NAMLE⁶⁴ (National Association for Media Literacy Education, before called AMLE) and Jenkins are in the organization NAMLEs National Advisory Council. This organization stresses the importance of Media education on the grounds that such teaching can help people of all ages to develop a habit of questioning, and an ability to express themselves as they need to become critical and active citizens with good communication skills that researchers believe needed in today's society. Recent research on Media education are in these days research in working groups with participants from both Europe and USA.

Year 2008 is USA probably the only English speaking country that still doesn't have defined and implemented instructions for Media Literacy Education in its overall curriculum⁶⁵ although some states, including Montana, Texas and California have had media education early in their curricula. Many researchers⁶⁶ have requested guidelines for teachers and strong forces are working since 2002 for the American children to get a better education in Media Literacy education. Canada is considered to be about 10 years before the United States in Media education at higher level⁶⁷, (secondary level), and to be a leading country when it comes to Media education. Critical Literacy and Visual Literacy is the essential elements of the curriculum in English Arts. Visual Literacy is the ability to understand and interpret the representation and symbolism of a stationary or moving image - how the meanings of the images are organized and built to make sense and to understand their impact on viewers. Media literacy in Canada is the ability to understand how the mass media such as TV, film, radio and newspapers are working, how they produce and are organized and how they can be used wisely. Critical Literacy is this ability to understand how all the speakers, writers and producers of visual texts occur in specific contexts with significant personal, social and cultural aspects⁶⁸.

⁶³ Thoman and Jolls, 2004, s.25-27

⁶⁴ NAMLE, 2009, the National Association for Media Literacy Education - US

⁶⁵ Wan, 2008, s 180

⁶⁶ Tyner, 2003 p 384

⁶⁷ Thoman and Jolls, 2004 s 281

⁶⁸ Media Awareness Network-Canada, 2009

7. Basic principles in Media Literacy education

Organizations UNESCO, European Commission, European Parliament and many media organizations such as AML⁶⁹, CML⁷⁰ and NAMLE⁷¹ have many strong statements on what the ability of Media literacy should consist of. The organizations have common objective of Media education in schools that provide Media literacy, which is one of the most important conditions for an active and full citizenship⁷². Media education is part of the fundamental rights of every citizen in the world and teaching will be aimed at children to better understand the world and participate in democratic and cultural life. Media education should aim to develop informed, reflective and involved citizens that are necessary in a democratic society⁷³. Media education will aim to give children the ability to effectively use media in the context of democratic rights and civic responsibility⁷⁴. Communicative ability is emphasized, too, which means everything from the creation of media productions using creative, technical, semiotic and social skills to blog and participate in virtual communities. Perez Tornero⁷⁵ is mentioning Habermas universal communication theory⁷⁶ and believes that it is in this perspective that the Citizens' communication skills are to be seen.

Every organization⁷⁷ seems to agree on four areas where good media skills needed

The skills related to media literacy can be summarised in four areas of ability: access, analysis, evaluation and creative production. All of these skills boost aspects of personal development: consciousness, critical thinking and problem –solving abilities⁷⁸.

Media education is placed in the context of lifelong learning at all stages⁷⁹, and should be used to create the exchange of network and the organization and visibility of international exchange⁸⁰. There is still no absolute common criteria of what a good Media education should

⁶⁹ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

⁷⁰ Centre for Media Literacy, 2009

⁷¹ Se bland annat UNESCO-Teacher training 2008, The European Commission – strategy for Media Literacy, 2007, NAMLE, 2008

⁷² Livingstone, 2007, s 116-11

⁷³ Se The European Commission-What, 2009b samt NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009

⁷⁴ The European Commission-What, 2009b

⁷⁵ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008

⁷⁶ Ibid. s108

⁷⁷ Se Centre for Media Literacy, 2008, s 65, samt The European Commission-What, 2009b

⁷⁸ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008, s105

⁷⁹ Krucsay, Ibid. s 198 samt Livingstone, 2007

⁸⁰ UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

include⁸¹, but organizations highlights the importance of global development of a common definition of Media education to strengthen the ties between media education, cultural diversity and respect for human rights⁸². Pérez Tornero⁸³ emphasizes that it is important to work with to reach a general understanding on Media education and Media literacy. In Europe, a project to describe and define what Media education / Media literacy conducted by the Council of Europe, European Commission and European Parliament with the support of expert groups and various media organizations as the European Charter of Media Literacy⁸⁴ and the OFCOM⁸⁵ in UK and consists of various areas relating to Media literacy. These areas also fits well with the organization NAMLE's basic principles⁸⁶. These basic principles have been worked out by a group media researcher, including Elizabeth Thoman⁸⁷ supported by a host of previous media researcher⁸⁸. NAMLE stresses that just because media is used in the classroom it does not mean that children receive Media education.

8. The agreement

To illustrate what the various organizations agree on the goals of Media education, their texts/comments are inserted in tables. In the first table no 1, the British OFCOM's definitions are used as headings, (which is the simplest definition),⁸⁹ and they states that Media literacy consist of the ability to access, understand and create communications in variety of contexts. OFCOM has some year later replaced the word *access* with the word *use*⁹⁰. It is obvious that this is an incomplete overview, but because the results are already showing great consistency,

⁸¹ Zacchetti and Vardakas, 2008, s 122

⁸² UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a, recommendation 2

⁸³ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008 s 103-105

⁸⁴ Se www.euromedialiteracy.eu/

⁸⁵ OFCOM, 2009a

⁸⁶ NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009

⁸⁷ Andra forskare är: Lynda Bergsma, David Considine, Sherri Hope Culver, Renee Hobbs, Amy Jensen, Faith Rogow, Elana Yonah Rosen, Cyndy Scheibe, Sharon Sellers-Clark och tillsammans utgjorde de styrelsen i AMLA, föregångaren till NAMLE ,

⁸⁸ Association for Media Literacy, British Film Institute, Center for Media Literacy, Ontario Ministry of Education Media Literacy Resource Guide, Project Look Sharp, Television Awareness Training, Neil Andersen, Frank Baker, Cary Bazalgette, David Buckingham, John Condry, Jay Francis Davis, Stan Denski, Barry Duncan, Linda Elder, Liz Flynn, Paolo Friere, John Taylor Gatto, George Gerbner, Steven Goodman, Bradley Greenberg, Thomas Gencarelli, Peter Henriot, Joe Holland, Stewart Hoover, Henry Jenkins, Tessa Jolls, Sut Jhally, Robert Kubey, Ben Logan, Len Masterman, Barrie McMahon, Laura Mulvey, Richard Paul, James Potter, John Pungente, Byron Reeves, David Scholle, Rosalind Silver, Art Silverblatt, Ladislaus Semali, Erik Strommen, Chris Sperry, Robyn Quin, Kathleen Tyner, and participants at the 1990 UNESCO Conference "New Directions in MediaEducation"

⁸⁹ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008 p 104

⁹⁰ OFCOM, 2009b

would a more extensive literature review not affect the results in any high degree. It is this consistency that is important.

Table no 1. The British OFCOM's definitions⁹¹

	Access/Use	Understand	Create
UNESCO ⁹²	to give access to all kinds of media that are potential tools to understand society and to participate in democratic life;	to develop skills for the critical analysis of messages, whether in news or entertainment, in order to strengthen the capacities of autonomous individuals and active users;	to encourage production, creativity and interactivity in the different fields of media communication.
The European Commission ⁹³	feeling comfortable with all existing media from newspapers to virtual communities;	understanding the economy of media and the difference between pluralism and media ownership; being aware of copyright issues which are essential for a "culture of legality", especially for the younger generation in its double capacity of consumers and producers of content.	using media creatively, as the evolution of media technologies and the increasing presence of the Internet as a distribution channel allow an ever growing number of Europeans to create and disseminate images, information and content;
European Charter of Media Literacy ⁹⁴	Effective use of media technologies to <i>access, store, retrieve and share</i> content to meet individual and community needs and interests.	<i>Understanding how and why</i> media content is produced. <i>Accessing and making informed choices</i> about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources.	<i>Creative use of the media</i> to express and communicate ideas, information and options.
NAMLE ⁹⁵	Media Literacy Education expands the concept of literacy (i.e., reading and writing) to include all forms of media.	Media Literacy education uses group discussion and analysis of media messages to help children understand and appreciate different perspectives and points of view.	Media Literacy Education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.
OFCOM ⁹⁶	Media literacy has parallels with traditional literacy; the ability to read and write text. Media literacy is the ability to 'read' and 'write' audiovisual information rather than text. At its simplest level media literacy is the ability to use a range of media and be able to understand the information received. ⁹⁷	questioning, analyzing and evaluating that information	to create their own website and contribute to a chat room discussion.

⁹¹ OFCOM, 2008

⁹² UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

⁹³ the European Commission, 2007

⁹⁴ Carlsson U., Tayie S., Jacquinot-Delaunay G., Perez Tornero J.M. and UNESCO, 2008b, pp 104-105

⁹⁵ NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009

⁹⁶ OFCOM, 2008

⁹⁷ Ibid.

9. Democratic rights and civil responsibilities

Many of the organizations use strong words about the objective of media education in order to provide society's inhabitants media literacy. This proves the importance of this objective.

Table no 2.

	Democratic rights and civil responsibilities
UNESCO	<p>to give access to all kinds of media that are potential tools to understand society and to participate in democratic life⁹⁸;</p> <p>Given the development of international exchanges and the globalisation phenomenon, media education should foster intercultural understanding and promote local cultures everywhere...//...</p> <p>...Media education contributes to people's empowerment and a shared sense of responsibility in society and as such is part of citizenship and human rights education.⁹⁹</p> <p>Media Education shall aim to give children the ability to effectively use media in the context of democratic rights and civic responsibilities¹⁰⁰</p>
European Commission	<p>The Commission considers media literacy as an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society...//...Media literacy is one of the most important conditions for an active and full citizenship and is one of the contexts in which intercultural dialogue must be promoted¹⁰¹.</p> <p>The Commission considers media literacy as an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society¹⁰².</p>
European Charter of Media Literacy	<p>Making effective use of media in the exercise of <i>democratic rights</i> and <i>civil responsibilities</i>¹⁰³.</p>
AML	<p>The media have a major role in mediating global events and issues from civil rights to terrorism¹⁰⁴.</p>
NAMLE (new for AMLE)	<p>Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, and the democratic process¹⁰⁵.</p> <p>Media Literacy Education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society¹⁰⁶.</p>
CML	<p>Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy¹⁰⁷.</p>

⁹⁸ UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ UN-Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education clearinghouse, 2009

¹⁰¹ The European Commission-What, 2009a

¹⁰² the EuropeanCommission, 2008

¹⁰³ Pérez Tornero J.M., 2008, p 105

¹⁰⁴ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008, point 7

¹⁰⁵ NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009 p 4

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.p 5

¹⁰⁷ UNESCO-Teacher training, 2008a, p 8

10. Critical Media Education

In addition to OFCOMs three main headings in Table 1, a third heading, *Critical Media Education / critical analysis*, is an important heading. To be able to safeguard the democratic society, the Critical media literacy is incredibly important. This competence must begin with an understanding and acceptance that all education is political. A good way to teach Critical media literacy is through a democratic pedagogy that respects civil liberties and principles of social justice¹⁰⁸. According to Kellner and Share¹⁰⁹ Critical media literacy offers the tools and framework to help children become subjects in the process of deconstructing injustices, expressing their own voices, and struggling to create a better society¹¹⁰. This expression is, following the thoughts of Critical media literacy, to become the tool and a model to help children make their own voice, and to work for a better society and support their own development to become democratic citizens¹¹¹. Children need to learn to question the ideals and values presented in the media before they adopt them. Knowledge in this area helps children develop to be mature, critical media users¹¹².

Table 3.

	Critical analyse of the content
UNESCO	To develop skills for the critical analysis of messages, whether in news or entertainment, in order to strengthen the capacities of autonomous individuals and active users; ¹¹³
European Commission	...having a critical approach to media as regards both quality and accuracy of content (for example, being able to assess information, dealing with advertising on various media, using search engines intelligently) ¹¹⁴ Media education will help the public perception of how the media filter their perceptions and opinions, shapes popular culture and influence personal choices ¹¹⁵
European Charter of Media Literacy	Critically analyzing the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey. Identifying, avoiding and/or challenging, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive, or harmful. ¹¹⁶
NAMLE	Critical Literacy is the ability to understand how all the speakers, writers and producers of visual texts occur in specific contexts with significant personal, social and cultural aspects ¹¹⁷ .

¹⁰⁸ Share, 2008

¹⁰⁹ Kellner and Share, 2005 p. 381

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.382

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 381-382

¹¹² Se t.ex. Wan, 2008

¹¹³ UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

¹¹⁴ the European Commission, 2008

¹¹⁵ The European Commission-What, 2009a

¹¹⁶ Carlsson U., Taye S., Jacquinot-Delaunay G., Perez Tornero J.M. and UNESCO, 2008b, pp 104-105

Kellner and Share¹¹⁸ go as far as to suggest that Critical media literacy provides individual power over their own culture and provides opportunities for people to create their own meaning and identity and to shape and reshape the material and social conditions in their culture and their society. These scientists warn that individuals and groups will be omitted of the emerging global economy, the networked society and digital culture. Critical media literacy offers the tools and framework that helps children to become involved in the process to prevent injustice, to express their own voices, and to fight to create a better society. The researchers argue that Critical media literacy offers an excellent model for the teaching of critical solidarity and skills that can challenge the social construction of information and communication, from hypertext to video games. Schools must change their way of teaching, by giving the children the ability to analyze and use the media to express their views in critical solidarity with the outside world.

11. Pedagogical suggestions for Critical Media education

UNESCO has in its proposal for teacher training adopted AML:s¹¹⁹ developed visions of Critical Media education. This has also NAMLE¹²⁰ and CML¹²¹ taken up and developed. To make this conception more concrete, this paper gives practical, pedagogical suggestions to the UNESCO / AML's headings. These suggestions are meant to be seen as proposals for a practical, good Critical media education. Beside the Critical media education, the proposals also include the other parts of the objectives of Media education; to use, to understand and to create. These principles are accompanied by practical explanations. The proposals are made in view of offer Media literacy education in schools for different ages. The proposals are made with a view to combine theory and practice which is considered to give the best media teaching in the school context¹²². When the analysis and production work together, the children learn in a natural process¹²³. Children receive Media education both as media consumers and media communicators.

¹¹⁷ Media Awareness Network-Canada, 2009

¹¹⁸ Kellner and Share, 2005 p 381

¹¹⁹ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada

¹²⁰ the National Association for Media Literacy Education - US

¹²¹ Centre for Media Literacy, 2008

¹²² Se även UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

¹²³ Centre for Media Literacy, 2008 s 39

1. All media are constructions

Media Education should provide children the ability to understand how and why media content is produced. Media education should expand the concept of literacy, namely the ability to read and write, to cover all media. Just as print literacy, these skills are in need of exercises that are integrated, interactive and with the opportunity to exercise many times. Children must feel themselves comfortable with all existing media from newspapers to virtual communities¹²⁴. Media education should give children knowledge of copyright, which is essential for a functioning legal culture, in his dual role as both consumers and content producers¹²⁵. To become media producers and to develop a critical and creative capacity makes children more powerful participants in society¹²⁶. When analyzing a media text, children consider questions like: How is this message constructed? How is the fairness¹²⁷? The purpose of media education should be to raise awareness of the many forms of media that people encounter in their everyday lives. Media education should build on previous knowledge, and strengthen the abilities of children of all ages and encourage children to actively use the media to access, store, and share content to meet individual and social needs and interests. Education shall aim to give children the knowledge to evaluate information and to use search engines intelligently¹²⁸. Media education should encourage an active, critical engagement and lead to a questioning and a critical capacity regarding the content of the messages we receive and create. Media Education shall provide children with the knowledge to better exploit the media for entertainment, access to culture, and to intercultural dialogue¹²⁹.

2. Each person interprets messages differently

Each person interprets messages in its own way depending on experience, culture, and values. To hear others' interpretations create respect for different cultures and convey appreciation for minority opinions, and this becomes an important skill in an increasingly multicultural world. Children should ask themselves: How will others understand this message in a different way¹³⁰? Each individual perceives a media experience in a unique way based on their own experiences (age, sex, education, cultural upbringing, life experiences and so on). A person born and raised in Australia has a completely different set of experiences after seeing the movie Australia (premiered in Sweden in 2009) than a person born and raised in Sweden. Media is part of the culture that functions as a generator of social / virtual communities, and people use their own abilities, their assumptions and their own experiences to construct their own interpretations of media content. The more differences that can be explained to us in other experience around us, the more attention we can have when it comes to accepting or rejecting the media.

¹²⁴ UNESCO-Teacher training, 2008a. Officell EU- översättning av *virtual community* är virtuell gemenskap.

¹²⁵ The European Commission-recommendation on media literacy, 2007

¹²⁶ UNESCO-Paris agenda, 2007a

¹²⁷ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

¹²⁸ Thoman and Jolls, 2004, s 26-27

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

3. The media have commercial interests

Most media are organized with a specific purpose, such as providing profits for a company or to change opinions¹³¹. Advertising and marketing brings the most money to the companies. Advertising is the most obvious way to create profit, but advertising can mean advertising in many forms, including product placement. Today it has become common that companies pay to produce television series such as the airport, and about life on board a ferry. The companies anticipate that these television series makes good advertising for their companies. A large part of the world's mass media today have been developed by commercial forces and continues to operate today as commercial enterprises. Other forms of advertising may be sponsorship, prizes, pop-up ads and surveys on the Internet, or competitions to name a stadium or a theatre. When analyzing a media text, children should ask themselves: Who created this and why? What benefits can the content be for someone? Who may be disadvantaged¹³²?

4. The media contain ideological and value messages

Media is no windows to the world, or mirrors the real world. All media are designed, and involve choices to be made. These choices inevitably reflect the constructor's values, attitudes and opinions. All words, images, or arrangements that were not accepted, you can not see or hear as audience¹³³. Being able to recognize and give name of missing perspectives is also important skills that one must ask himself every day in his life by an increasingly multicultural society. The messages we are seeing in the media, such as television news, a sign on the street, or political leaflet, are written by one or more, are edited by a creative team. Media have embedded views and ideological values, for example, positive values as gender equality, democracy, all of equal value, but of course equally well the opposite. The choices of an environment, urban, rural, rich or poor, and the actions and reactions of actions, are just some of the ways that values become "embedded" in a TV show, a movie, or in commercials. The decision on a character, age, gender or race mixed with the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviour as described. Even the news has embedded values in the decisions about which stories come first, how long they are, which images are selected, and so on. If children receive training on identifying both open and hidden values in the media, they will be more tolerant of differences. They will be more clever in their decision to accept or reject the overall message. When analyzing a media text, children should consider the following questions: Which lifestyles, values and views are represented in, or are excluded in this content¹³⁴?

5. Each medium has its own language, style, techniques, codes, conventions and aesthetics

Media are constructed using a creative language with its own rules and use creative components to put together words, music, colour, movement, camera angles and much more in its language. It could mean big headlines signal significance, scary music that increases the fear and close-ups with the camera that mediate tenderness¹³⁵. Media education should provide children a capacity for creative use of media to express and communicate ideas,

¹³¹ NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009

¹³² The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Thoman and Jolls, 2004

information and opinions. The best way to understand how the media functions is to use them - to make a video, creating a site or developing an advertising campaign. In this way the children understand how such media work, planned and carried out in various genres. To understand the grammar, syntax and metaphor for the media, especially for the visual language, helps us to be less exposed to manipulation. It also helps us to enjoy the media environment.¹³⁶ When analyzing a media text, children need to learn to ask themselves: What methods are used and why?

6. The media have commercial implications

European Union documents¹³⁷ stress the knowledge of copyright and argue that children and young people should learn what is permitted or not in relation to media use. Fogelberg¹³⁸ argues that we need to have knowledge of the political and economic forces behind the media to understand how the media works. Older children should learn to understand the economy of media and the difference between pluralism and media ownership. How the media is owned, operated and regulated is an important knowledge for understanding the media and media system's role in society. In the concept of media literacy is an awareness of the economic basis of mass media. Various networks are seeking audience to be delivered to sponsors. Knowledge of this allows children to understand how media content makes them targets for advertisers, and how media owners organizes programs to groups that are potential consumers. The question of ownership and control is essential at a time when there are more choices but fewer votes. (Ninety percent of the world's newspapers, magazines, TV stations, movies and computer software companies are owned by seven corporate conglomerates¹³⁹.)

7. The media have social and political implications

An important dimension of media literacy is that it is an awareness of the wide range of social and political effects of media. Changes in family life, use of leisure time and the results of TV political debates are three such examples. Mass media serve to legitimize society's values and attitudes. The media also has an important role to inform about global events and issues, from civil rights to terrorism¹⁴⁰. Media education should help children to realize how the media filter their perceptions and opinions, shapes popular culture and influence personal choices. Teaching should give children the capacity for critical thinking and a creative ability to solve problems to make the children to citizens who are discerning consumers and producers of information. Media Education shall give the children the ability to reflect on the motives and purpose of media content. It is important to give children the ability to identify, avoid and / or challenge the media content and services that may be undesirable, offensive or harmful¹⁴¹. When the children evaluate a specific media, it helps if they know if the objective is a profit or a political message. The citizens of each country should be equipped with the ability to determine both the economic and ideological motives to ensure democracy¹⁴². The question of how to make their voices heard, has changed dramatically since the Internet became an

¹³⁶ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

¹³⁷ NORDICOM-Utblick Europa, 2009

¹³⁸ Fogelberg, 2009 s 6

¹³⁹ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ NAMLE-Core Principles, 2009

¹⁴² Thoman and Jolls, 2004

international platform through which groups and organizations and even individuals, have access to powerful tools they can use to convince others of a particular point of view. President Obama in the U.S. might have won the election largely thanks to his supporters who worked on the Internet. But even his opponents have used digital media to virtual slander campaigns. A rumour spread that Obama was a Muslim, a rumour which was meant to destroy his chances in the presidential election..

8. Form and content are closely related in the media.

Form and content are closely related in the media as related to Marshall McLuhan's view¹⁴³ that the medium is the content. All media have their own special grammar and technical bias and codify reality in a unique way. Different media can report the same events and reach different interpretations, even news¹⁴⁴. Media Education shall provide children the ability to critically analyze technology, language and conventions used by the media and the messages they convey. What is important is to understand that the information reinforces or challenges the interpretation given to their environment and the people in it. To help children and young people to understand how the media shape what we know and understand about the world we live in, is an important first step in understanding that the media is not natural but constructed¹⁴⁵.

12. Conclusion

The unity of the various organizations regarding the importance of media education to give children skills which supports Democratic rights and civil responsibilities is obvious in table 2. Media and Information Skills are increasingly linked to issues of democracy and participatory citizenship. Media and information education becomes a fundamental part of the work to achieve a media and information society where these skills are important to promote a knowledgeable, democratic and sustainable society. Freedom of expression and right to information for all, and media skills are crucial for building and sustaining democracy¹⁴⁶. According to key findings from new research¹⁴⁷, children from lower status homes are more exposed to risks online. This paper argues that Media education in school is very important for promoting a more equal society. With the help of policy and research texts, this paper argues the importance of a qualified Media education in schools, even in the young school age. The lessons in school are limited. Teachers must find it useful to use lessons on Media education. The teachers need both to gain knowledge of the importance of such

¹⁴³ McLuhan, 1964

¹⁴⁴ The Association for Media Literacy-Canada, 2008

¹⁴⁵ Thoman and Jolls, 2004

¹⁴⁶ Jacquinet-Delaunay, Carlsson, Tayie and Perez Tornero, 2008, s 24

¹⁴⁷ Livingstone and Haddon, 2009 p 17

teaching, and also suggestions on how such an important teaching can be integrated in their activities and not just steal lesson time. For further research, this paper proposes a study of how Media education can be done in schools to give children the opportunity to conquer more of these specific objectives, and then with an emphasis on democratic/active citizenship. In 2009 the organization The UN - Alliance of Civilization publishes, in collaboration with UNESCO and with the support of Grupo Comunicar and the European Commission, the book: Mapping Media Education Policies in the World: Visions. The book ends with the question if the political will exists to develop Media education:

Must not the Media education have a more robust place in national and international political strategies following the principles of the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, if Media literacy is to be understood as civic skills and as a part of responsible citizenship¹⁴⁸?

This question has become very important to me and will follow me through my further work. In my opinion all country need to follow Finland¹⁴⁹ and include Critical media education in their curriculum in Primary schools or even already in Pre-primary schools. If children receive good Media education throughout their time in school, from preschool into adulthood, the children will not only become well-equipped to cope well in society regardless of their parents' knowledge about the Internet and new media, but also resources to preserve a democratic society.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations, Alliance of Civilizations, UNESCO, European Commission and Grupo Comunicar, 2009

¹⁴⁹ Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona-Finland, 2007

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